

Nic Bishop *Snakes* by Nic Bishop. Scholastic Nonfiction, 2012

Summary

Nic Bishop takes the reader through the intricacies of a snake's life. In this book, the reader learns about different species of snakes and their common (and not so common) behaviors. Along with the interesting, detailed facts about snakes, the reader is also provided with incredible photographs of over twenty different snakes taken by Nic Bishop himself!

Awards

NSTA Outstanding Science Trade Books for Students K—12: 2013

SLJ Best Children's Books 2012, Nonfiction

2012 Cybils Award Finalist, Nonfiction Picture Books

2013 Notable Children's Books in the English Language Arts

Book Review

“Bishop returns with his always-amazing photographs, here of snakes in all their scaly sinuosity. Seemingly impossible-to-get shots of the animals poised and alert, arched and ready to strike, and even swallowing an egg whole are interspersed with more restful moments during which snakes are coiled onto branches or camouflaged by sand. All the images feature gorgeous colors and a clarity that allows details such as the edges of scales and the flexing of musculature to be examined. It will take a while for readers to tear themselves away from the images to read the accompanying text that describes snake behavior, physiology, and eating habits, including their fascinating ability to swallow animals bigger than themselves. As in previous titles (about Spiders and Frogs, both rev. 3/08; and Lizards, rev. 11/10, for example), topic sentences for each spread appear in a larger font and a contrasting color. In a riveting note at the end of the book, Bishop reveals the lengths he went to to get these perfect shots (including a bite from a brown tree snake that left some of the snake's teeth buried in his hand): he housed several of the snakes and photographed them in controlled environments, sometimes from behind glass for his protection.” - Danielle J. Ford, The Horn Book Magazine starred review”
(Amazon.com)

Author's webpage location

<http://www.nicbishop.com/> (Nic Bishop takes his own photos)

Discussion Questions

3 questions to ask BEFORE they read the book:

What do you know about snakes?
What have you heard about snakes?
What makes snakes scary?

3 questions to ask DURING the reading of the book:

Are any of your previous notions about snakes inaccurate?
What are new facts that you are realizing about snakes?
Are there any new vocabulary words that you needed to use context clues for figuring out the definition?

3 questions to ask AFTER they have read the book:

How do snakes and humans differ in using their senses? How are they the same?
Which snake(s) stood out to you the most? Why?
What are some defenses that snakes use to protect themselves?

Activities to use with the book

Reading/Oral Language

After reading *Nic Bishop Snakes*, have a PowerPoint slide pulled up with the following vocabulary words on it: cold-blooded, scales, eggs, rattle, poison, venom, slither, species, habitat, toxic. Have the students go back into the book and find these words and reread them in their context. Then, have the students orally explain in small groups the definitions of these words (the use of a dictionary is encouraged during this time). Then, hold an oral class discussion using questions that encourage the use of the vocabulary words in the answers. (This activity was modified from the activity listed at: <http://treasures.macmillanmh.com/e/teachers/resources/grade5/oral-language-resources/resource/slithery-snakes>)

Writing

After reading *Nic Bishop Snakes*, have the students close their books and put them away (if they each had their own—if you read the book to them, do this activity immediately after reading the book to the class). Have each student take out a sheet of loose leaf paper or a writing journal, and instruct the students to write for five minutes straight without stopping. The writing they will be doing is about everything they remember from the book whether it was the pictures, information, and/or thoughts. After the five minutes, have the students go back and revise their writing into complete sentences and paragraphs—adding structure. Once the students are done modifying their ‘essay’ they can hand it in. The point of this

activity is to have the students retain thoughts and information and work on getting ideas down on paper and then modifying it, building their writing skills.

Science

Bring different types of snakes to class! Find out the school's policy on animals on school property, first of course. If the school allows animals inside the classroom, find friends/family/local pet store that has snakes you can borrow/purchase to have in your classroom. I would highly recommend bringing snakes that are not venomous—for the safety of the children. Snakes that are popular in Illinois (that are nonvenomous) are: the Midwestern Worm Snake, Kirtland's Snake, the Blue Racer, the Southern Black Racer, the Northern Ringneck Snake, and the Mississippi Ringneck Snake (information about these snakes came from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_snakes_of_Illinois). If you are to have snakes in your classroom, remind the students that they are to be observed only. Have background information not only on the snakes as a particular species, but the personality of the snake as well to ensure the safety of the students and yourself.

Social Studies

Have students pick three different snakes from *Nic Bishop Snakes* and hand them a blank world map. Have the students make a colored key on the side of the map, and research the different locations of the snakes and color code the map according to the places that the snakes are found worldwide. This helps the students with map and research skills.

Art

Have the students select a snake from *Nic Bishop Snakes* and give them the opportunity to make the snake out of clay. With the clay drying and painting, this activity may take a couple of days, but it can give the students plenty of time to research their particular snake and end up giving a presentation on their snake that they had made. For younger students, have them make their own snake, come up with different snake facts, and end up presenting it.

Technology

Integrate computers/Chrome Books into the classroom with research being conducted in the activities listed above.

Music

A Silly Slippery Snake—a song that you can sing with younger students about snakes!

(Tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It")

Oh, I wish I was a silly, slippery snake.

Oh, I wish I was a silly, slippery snake.

Oh I'd slither across the floor and I'd slip under the door

Oh, I wish I was a silly, slippery snake.

(This idea was retrieved from: <http://www.kidzone.ws/lw/snakes/activities-songs.htm>)

Related Books

Slinky, Scaly Snakes by Jennifer Dussling

The New Encyclopedia of Snakes by Chris Mattison

Snakes (Photo-fact Collections Series) by Jane P. Resnick

Snakes Up Close by Christopher Blazeman

Other Books written by the author (5 pts.)

Nic Bishop Marsupials

Nic Bishop Lizards

Nic Bishop Butterflies and Moths

Nic Bishop Frogs

Chameleon, Chameleon

Saving the Ghost of the Mountain

Nic Bishop Spiders

The Tarantula Scientist

Forest Explorer

Backyard Detective

The Mysterious Universe

3 websites that provide games, activities, etc. relating to the book

Fun Trivia: Snakes (<http://www.funtrivia.com/html5/index.cfm?qid=311495>)

This website offers a trivia quiz based off of information about snakes (which many questions can be found by reading Nic Bishop Snakes). Some questions are fairly easy, while some are a bit more challenging. This is a timed quiz, and after every answer, the quiz provides you with an explanation of why the answer was correct/incorrect.

National Geographic Kids: Search Snakes
(<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/search/>)

This website is a search link off of the National Geographic Kids website (just type 'snakes' into the search bar). This website offers videos about snakes that would certainly intrigue younger audiences. Some of the videos go over the 'false fronts' that snakes put on to defend themselves from getting hurt/eaten. This ties in with the defense mechanisms that Nic Bishop describes in his book as well.

Reptile Games:

http://www.learninggamesforkids.com/animal_and_nature_games/reptile_games/

This website helps students with a lot of reptile vocabulary that may be new to students. There are many interactive games that students will enjoy playing, and it ties in with the snakes that Nic Bishop talks about in his book.